

The Groom Lake Desert Rat

"The Naked Truth from Open Sources."

AREA 51/NELLIS RANGE/TTR/NTS/S-4?/WEIRD STUFF/DESERT LORE

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Vaudeville in Vegas

Land Grab Hearing Upstages Casinos as "Best Entertainment Value"

About 200 citizens, four television crews and a gaggle of print reporters packed a large meeting room at the Cashman Field Center for the March 2 public hearing on the Groom Lake land withdrawal. Although the two hour meeting went pretty much as expected, there was nothing dull about these proceedings. Speakers from all walks of life bared their inner passions before the microphone, and the three minute time limit assured they didn't reveal too much. The event was far superior to any floor show on the Strip: a lively theater of humanity occasionally spiced by the burlesque of the absurd.

The meeting began with the AF and BLM representatives providing their expected introductions. Neither deviated much from their comments at the Caliente hearing. [Col. Bennett](#) offered an almost exact word-for-word repetition of his Caliente remarks, which emphasized the importance of the Nellis Range for training military pilots. He said nothing to acknowledge a base at Groom Lake. There was no opportunity for the BLM or AF to take questions, and the four AF reps sat silently in the audience for the remainder of the meeting.

After that slow start, the fireworks began. About 25 citizens exercised their privilege of public comment, with only two offering lucid support for the Air Force. Of course, there weren't many lucid opponents, either. The majority of the arguments presented were entirely irrelevant to the land grab issue, but these were by far the most entertaining. Hideous genetic experiments conducted on missing children were revealed at Groom Lake, and one wild-eyed radical, reading from the Koran, invoked the wrath of Allah on the BLM.

About a third of the speakers managed to remain on topic. As a group, they were soft-spoken and not nearly as colorful as the others, but these comments will have a more lasting effect. The most promising challenges focused on the limited areas where BLM has jurisdiction. BLM has neither the resources nor the mandate to evaluate UFO stories, hazardous waste claims, underground genetic experiments, evil world-wide conspiracies or any of the other charges made concerning Groom Lake. It can only evaluate the legal adequacy of the application and the direct environmental and land-use impacts of the withdrawn land itself.

Below are the comments of some of the more memorable speakers, transcribed from tape. We will start with the most germane then disintegrate toward chaos.

A Lawyer Speaks

Steve Hofer, a consumer and public interest attorney from Indianapolis, has been working with the White Sides Defense Committee to lay the foundation for a legal case should it become necessary. His comments:

This land as a matter of law, the law set by Congress, has the presumption of the preferred use of public multiple use. Any of us, we can use it for livestock, we can use it for recreation --that's the preferred use of the land. The Air Force has the burden to show that its use is more important. And the law specifically says what the Air Force must do, the standards the Air Force must follow, to meet that presumption. I've reviewed the Air Force's application, and they have not met that standard.

The Bureau of Land Management should reject that application as legally insufficient, the reason being that the Air Force must state the purpose of the withdrawal. The Air Force has not stated the purpose of the withdrawal. The only purpose that they've stated is that the land is needed to be withdrawn because of [public] safety [and] for the safe and secure operation of activities on the Nellis Range. Well, that's not a use of the land. The Bureau of Land Management has no way to evaluate whether or not that's true. Because they don't have any way to evaluate it, then by necessity that application is arbitrary and capricious, and it must be rejected as a matter of the law, and [if not] it can be challenged on judicial review.

How do we know that the [AF reason] is insufficient?... What evidence have they presented that there is any public safety risk? Have they presented any evidence that people have been hurt there? Air Force planes have crashed all over the place. An Air Force National Guard plane crashed into a Ramada Inn in my home city of Indianapolis; that doesn't mean that the Guard should not be allowed to do take-off and landings there. There's a little bit of risk in all of it...

How do we evaluate the importance of the security [of operations on the Nellis Range] if they won't tell us what the operations are there? There's a provision that says that they don't have to tell us; they can say the reason is secret. Then they've at least got to tell the Secretary of the Interior. But the Air Force in their application didn't say that this was secret. They didn't say anything. That's why the [BLM] should reject it out of hand, and we should continue to talk to our elected representatives to make sure they do it.

The provision for secrecy that Mr. Hofer mentions is contained in federal regulations governing the withdrawal (43 CFR, Section 2310.1-2, Part 7). According to this, the applicant must state "the public purpose or statutory program for which the lands would be withdrawn. If the purpose or program for which the land would be withdrawn is classified for national security reasons, a statement to that effect must be included..."

As we understand Mr. Hofer's argument, the AF has not stated on its application to the BLM that the purpose of the withdrawal is classified. Therefore it is liable for a complete and open accounting of its purpose and intentions, which it has not provided.

The 5000 Acre Limit

Several speakers pointed out that the AF wasn't trying to take all the viewpoints into the Groom Lake base, only the most convenient ones that could be neutralized with under 5000 acres. According to federal law ("The Engle Act"), a withdrawal or aggregate withdrawal "for any one defense project or facility" requires Congressional approval, a process that the AF is loath to consider. Congress could demand more accountability or turn down the application if the reason isn't good enough.

Peter Merlin of Los Angeles testified that he had climbed Tikaboo Peak, a tall mountain to the east of Freedom Ridge, and found a full view of the Groom Lake base, albeit from much further away. Glenn Campbell of the WSDC, private citizen Steve McKelvey and another speaker from the government oversight group Citizen Alert expressed the concern that the 4000 acres being sought now would not be the end of the AF's land needs.

In a flyer distributed at the hearing and submitted into the record on behalf of the WSDC, Campbell said:

The public has a reasonable right to protect itself from the possibility of future 'piecemealing.' To fulfill this

need, BLM must require the AF to openly state, in writing and on the record, the true and obvious reason for the withdrawal: to hide the Groom Lake air base from public view.

Once the real reason is stated, the public may see that the AF is not doing the whole job. Seizing ANY of the viewpoints makes sense only if they seize ALL the viewpoints, even if it requires more than 5000 acres.

This withdrawal raises broad issues about defense priorities and government oversight that should be openly debated in Congress. Only in Congress can the voice of the people be heard.

Secret Base Revealed

If anyone doubted that there was a base at Groom Lake, "Black World Investigator" Mark Farmer from Juneau, Alaska, displayed for the audience an eight foot panoramic photograph of the Groom Lake base, apparently taken from Freedom Ridge. Photocopies of the March *Popular Science* article were also available to the audience. A couple of speakers alluded to the recent reports of a hazardous waste dump at the base, and many others expressed the need for greater openness and accountability in military affairs.

Steve McKelvey of Las Vegas quoted from the Uniform Commercial Code: "Lack of full disclosure is grounds for fraud in any contract."

Air Force Supporters

Only two people spoke clearly in favor of the Air Force, with a couple of others seeming to lean that way. We are embarrassed to report that the two supporters were heckled by some members of the audience. We regard the catcalls as unwarranted and undemocratic. Those hard-line anti-Soviet folks are so rare these days that we think the few remaining should be respected and treasured, like National Historic Landmarks.

One offered the following:

You know, just recently we witnessed the arrest of a notorious spy in Washington, D.C., a CIA agent who was spying for the Soviet Union. He provided them with some of the most essential, critical intelligence information that I think we've ever known to go to them. I think it should be noted that on their list of targets and collection items, one of the highest priorities is stealth technology.

Back in the days of the missile build-up, there was a writer for Aviation Week and Space Technology who roamed the halls of the Pentagon getting all the intelligence data concerning missile force development, and he wrote [it] in Aviation Week and Space Technology. The Soviets thought that document was so important to them that they bought a proof copy of that document, translated it enroute while they were flying it back to Moscow, and this writer provided the Soviet Union the biggest confidential intelligence on the United States that their intelligence agencies could not collect.

Now we find the situation in our back door. We have citizens and also foreign agents... comes into our country, goes to the vantage point, does the same thing that the CIA spy did, spies on the government activities, sells that to the Soviets. This gentleman who had the photographs [Mark Farmer], I'd like to ask him, did he take those pictures or did he buy those from somebody? If he had those pictures, why does he have those pictures? He's going to sell them to somebody. He's going to do the same thing the CIA agent has done, I guarantee you that.

We have citizens of this country who have sons, daughters, brothers, sisters and grandchildren who wear the uniform of United States military services. They want to know that the people they ask to go into battle will be the best equipped, the best trained that they can possibly be.

You know, at one time we had a great advantage on the Soviets in the air-to-air missile capability, air-to-air take-outs. American citizens stole all the technology--a company in California sold it to the Soviets. Instead

of our airmen, who represent everybody in this room... [Heckling begins]... at one time or another they themselves were Joe Blow citizen in high school someplace [and now] they're wearing the uniform. And yet these people want them to go out and defend them and have the enemy know everything about their capabilities. It doesn't work that way. I tell you right now, I've learned two things in my life that are absolutes, and there are very few absolutes in this world. One thing, There is a God. The second thing, I ain't him.

Another speaker said he was a former chairman on the National Investigating Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), an early UFO group.

I think that many of you people are doing yourselves quite a disservice, and I am proud in this case to defend the Air Force. I am also a USMA West Point graduate, Class of '56, classmate of Schartzkopf, and, for one, I don't appreciate people who laugh at the risk of lives because of secret information being given out. And if you think it's a game we're playing here, well you're mistaken. I've had more experience investigating and looking into these things than 90-some percent of you people out there, and I think, frankly, you're screwing yourselves. The reason this land is being taken is because the issue has been made of it and [people are] always conducting tours on the top of those hills that look down on the base, whether it exists or doesn't exist. We know it exists. The stealth work was done down there; there could be other stuff going on there. Hey, this is the same war we're in. If you think the Cold War stopped, you're mistaken. We can investigate things that are of interest without having to climb on top of mountains and look down and see the government space here, if you like it or not, to defend the U-2. [Heckling begins.]

[Speaker identified in [DR#5](#).]

BLM Bashers

As happened at the Caliente hearing, a number of speakers seemed to have no direct complaint about the withdrawal itself but were only upset with BLM. One older gentleman, apparently a rancher, told a richly emotional but entirely irrelevant story of the AF setting fire to his friend's grazing allotment, and the BLM forcing the friend to herd his cattle by hand all winter long to keep them off the burned area. The acting was "B" quality but we would give him an "A" for effort as he verged on tears recounting the heartbreaking abuse the friend had suffered at the hands of that NEFARIOUS FEDERAL LAND AGENCY.

We suspect but cannot prove that this speaker was an agent of the same Throw-BLM-Out movement that dominated the Caliente hearing. Alas, here in the big city, the visiting revolutionaries were easily upstaged by all the other fringe groups competing for attention. Any momentum generated by the first speaker's compelling performance was dissipated shortly thereafter by a woman whose acting was REALLY bad. She pretended to cry as she told the audience about movement leader Dick Carver and his "very special letter" to the Secretary of the Interior. (This letter is the group's "Declaration of Independence" from BLM.) Changing character almost instantly, she became firm and resolute as she announced that "the State of Nevada owns the public lands, not the Bureau of Land Management." The appeal didn't appear to have much meaning to the mostly urban audience, who saw only her theatrics.

A couple of other land-revolt supporters tried to get things moving again, but to no avail. By the half-time intermission, their hope to make a big splash was dead in the water. Two scheduled speakers from Lincoln County bowed out altogether and were seen heading for the door. They were among only a handful to leave early; the vast majority of the audience stayed for the entire riveting show.

Anthony Hilder

Anthony Hilder is a radio talk show host from Anchorage, Alaska.

This issue is the withdrawal of freedom, not just Freedom Ridge, but freedom. [Applause.] The issue here is the New World Order. This colonel behind me is a representative of the New World Order. They are concerned about security, not for you, not for your nation, not for your interests, not for your children. They

are concerned about the security of those who wish to surrender the sovereignty of the United States and establish a One World Government.

If you do not take a stand now, surely you will fall. God knows what they're testing out there. Do they have genetic engineering programs? Do they have bacteriological warfare programs? Did they not, in fact, create a thing called AIDS? Do they want to reduce the population of the planet by twenty-five percent by the year 2000? You cannot allow them to take your property. This is YOUR land. It is not their spread.

Adolph Hitler wrote the book, 'The New World Order,' and he used the Big Lie. He could not allow the people to go in and take a look at the camps at Nordhaus, Auschwitz and Dachau. There are missing children, a hundred thousand plus across this nation. Where are they being taken to? Are they being used for medical experiments? Are there anti-gravitational disks being flown over there that were first developed under Adolph Hitler? Yes, yes, yes. You cannot, you must not allow it.

Wrath Of Allah

If the BLM Bashers had stuck it out for the duration, they would have gained at least some moral support from an earnest young man with a crew-cut holding a large green book. He spoke in an accent from the Middle East and at a very high decibel level. He was identified only as "Moe." [Editor's note: Because of Moe's heavy accent some of his words are unintelligible to us. Although we may not have transcribed them all correctly, we've done our best to reproduce at least the sound and fury of this impassioned speech.]

IN THE NAME OF GOD, MY NAME IS MOE. I'M A PERMANENT RESIDENT WHO'S BEEN LIVING IN LAS VEGAS FOR OVER SIX YEARS. BELIEVE IN YOUR GOD.

[Holds up the green book.]

THIS IS THE LAST HOLY BOOK OF GOD. KORAN. WHICH HAS ONE HUNDRED FIFTEEN CHAPTERS. QUESTION: WHAT IS THE NUMBER OF THE AREA WHERE THE SECRET BASE IS LOCATED? FIFTY-ONE. LET'S SEE WHAT GOD SAID IN CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE.

[Opens book.]

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE OF KORAN. BELIEVE IN YOUR GOD. PROMISE IN THE WINDS WHICH BLOW IN HOLY DIRECTIONS. PROMISE IN THE CLOUDS THAT CARRY HEAVY RAINS. PROMISE TO THE ANGELS WHO PERFORM THE ORDERS OF GOD. PROMISE TO ALL CORNERS THAT WHATEVER YOU SAY IS TRUE...

GOD SAY TO MOHAMMED, 'HAVE YOU EVER HEARD ABOUT THE ESTER OF ALCOHOL AND ANGELS? HAVE YOU EVER HEARD ABOUT THAT?' THEY GO TO HIM AND SAY HI. THE ANSWER MOHAMMED TOLD THEM, 'YOU ARE VERY STRANGE PEOPLE.' ALIENS!

ABRAHAM TOLD THEM COME TO EAT. THEY REFUSE TO EAT. THAT WEAPON WHAT THE ALIEN EAT. IN THE MOMENT, ABRAHAM GOD SAW IN FRONT OF HIM. HE SAY ABRAHAM, 'DON'T BE AFRAID. WE ARE HERE TO TELL YOU THAT YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE A VERY INTELLIGENT SON. IN THE NAME OF YOUR NATION. IN THE NAME OF YOUR NATION.'

ABRAHAM SAID, 'WHAT IS YOUR DUTY HERE?' TO THE ALIENS, 'WHAT IS YOUR DUTY HERE?' THE ANSWER, 'WE ARE HERE TO DESTROY THE BAD CRIME!'

[Points accusingly at BLM officers on the stage.]

THE TERRIBLE TRUTH! THE STONE RING OF STONE. THE STONE IS YOUR SUFFERING TO GOD, AND THERE'S A SPECIAL PART IN THERE FOR CRIMINALS!

[Points again at BLM.]

ALL ALIENS! ALL ALIENS! THE WORD OF GOD FIVE THOUSAND YEARS AGO. WE WANT TO SEE THE FREEDOM OF THOSE CAPTURED ALIENS, BECAUSE WE ARE HERE TO SAVE THE GOOD FROM THE BAD ONE MORE TIME.

FREEDOM, FREEDOM OF CAPTURED ALIENS! WE ARE HERE TO SAVE THE GOOD FROM BAAAD!

[Points again at BLM.]

FEAR IN YOUR GOD!

ANALYSIS. Our advice to BLM officials: Now that you know which side God is on, we want you to think about this decision very, very carefully. Remember what happened to Salman Rushdie.

Media Coverage

The Las Vegas hearing was covered by three local television stations. One of them, KLAS Channel 8, reported live from the hearing on their evening newscast. One of the other local stations came at the request of a MAJOR NETWORK NEWS MAGAZINE, which is considering doing a story. A crew from CNN was also on hand, and their report, including a visit to Freedom Ridge, aired world-wide the following evening. Reporters from the two major Las Vegas newspapers were in attendance, as well as some miscellaneous out-of-town press and this reporter from the GROOM LAKE DESERT RAT.

What's Next?

It is not entirely clear what the sequence of events will be following the hearing. The hearing marked the end of the official public comment period, but the public will also have 30 days to review the draft version of the AF's Environmental Assessment report. According to the BLM Area Manager, it could be two weeks before the draft report is ready for review.

We asked the Area Manager what was the soonest the land could possibly be closed if the withdrawal is granted. His most conservative estimate, if everything went unrealistically well for the AF, is 45 to 60 days after the hearing, which would mean mid-April or early May. Needless to say, things are NOT going well for the AF, and further delays are possible.

Further follow-up on the hearing should appear in [DR#5](#).

In Brief

TRESPASSER TRIAL DATE SET. The trial for four of seven accused trespassers [[DR#1](#), [DR#2](#)] who drove past the border on Groom Lake Road Jan. 2 has been rescheduled for Wednesday, Apr. 18 at 2pm in Alamo Justice Court (County Annex Building, Alamo, Nevada). This otherwise minor misdemeanor trial has the potential to become the next big media event, since it involves the anonymous CAMMO DUDES, dubiously deputized by Lincoln County, who patrol the perimeter and public lands near the Groom Lake base. The same MAJOR NETWORK NEWS MAGAZINE that covered the hearing is also interested in the trespassers' story.

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